

## RUSSIA AND THE WEST IN IRAN

war in Europe. By August, 1941, the number of Germans in Iran reached two thousand. The Deutsches Haus on the elegant Qavam as-Saltaneh Avenue became a social center for German citizens.

The main center of Nazi political activity in the Middle East was the German Legation in Bagdad under the able leadership of Dr. Grobba. Compelled to leave Iraq after the outbreak of war between Germany and Britain, Grobba moved with his personnel to Teheran and there, in the spacious quarters of the new legation, was able to continue his work. During the short-lived Rashid Ali's revolt in Iraq in 1941 Grobba went again to Bagdad, to return to Germany through Syria. The defeated rebel Rashid Ali, however, fled to Iran, seeking refuge in a country with pro-German orientation.

## THE GERMAN FIFTH COLUMN IN IRAN

To experienced observers it was obvious that Germany was building a powerful fifth column in Iran. The penetration or outright control of railways, airlines, and a number of vital industries placed the Germans in an important strategic position within the country and promised effective action in the event of some emergency. The menace that this well-organized body of Germans represented to the Allies was especially alarming in the spring and the summer of 1941. The revolt of Rashid Ali in Iraq, which broke out early in that year, permitted Germany to make a bold thrust into the Middle East. Rashid Ali, having installed himself as a pro-Axis premier in Bagdad, asked Berlin for assistance, which was readily given to him. The French administration in Syria, under the Vichyite General Dentz, granted the right to German aircraft to use Syrian

airfields in transit  
to Iraq. Soon German planes were landing in the oil-  
rich Mosul and  
Kirkuk areas, British subjects, including the Embassy  
and consular  
staffs, were detained by the rebellious authorities  
and kept under  
close arrest. The success of German enterprise in Iraq  
would have  
permitted them to establish a direct link with the fifth  
column in Iran,  
and to exert even more powerful influence on the not  
unwilling  
Iranian government. Although this success did not  
materialize as a  
result of energetic British counteraction, the  
presence of German  
agents in Iran still remained a threat to Allied  
interests. With the